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ABSTRACT

This paper offers an overview of current debates on moral development and education, focusing on the relationship between empirical and theoretical research and raising four issues that are central to current research: (1) demarcation of the moral domain; (2) the gap between "is" and "ought," between facts and values; (3) moral action; and (4) moral relativism. The study takes as its point of reference Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental approach to moral judgment. Discussions about the demarcation of the moral domain show little agreement about what counts as "moral" and what does not. A similar conclusion is reached with respect to the question of the relationship between facts and values, between "is" and "ought." In examining "moral action," the essay concludes that its two central constructs--the relation between moral motivation and morally relevant behavior--are impossible to define independently. On the fourth issue, moral relativism, the paper concludes that it is not possible to validate the central constructs of research on moral development and education on the basis of the outcome of empirical research alone. The paper also concludes that these findings suggest the need to return to and examine the modern character of the fundamental philosophical assumptions that underlie the conceptualization of morality and moral development. (Contains 132 references.) (CH)

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Towards a Postmodern Theory of Moral Education
Part I: Clearing the Terrain

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

TOWARDS A POSTMODERN THEORY OF MORAL EDUCATION

Over the past decade educational scholarship has been significantly influenced by postmodern and poststructural thought (see, e.g., Cherryholmes, 1988, Lather, 1991, Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, & Peter, 1996, Stronach & MacLure, 1997, Peters, 1998). In the field of moral development and education, however, this influence is still remarkably absent (two recent exceptions are Lourenco, 1996, Teo, 1997). This absence may well be the result of the rather widespread conviction that postmodern and poststructural philosophy is unable to contribute to the moral and political project that education is. Yet, over the past years, both philosophers and educational theorists have been arguing that postmodern and poststructural thought should *not* be understood as an expression of permissive relativism or paralyzing nihilism, but that moral and political concerns are at its center (see Bauman, 1993, Biesta, 1995, 1998, Biesta & Egea-Kuehne, in press, Critchley, 1999a, 1999b). There appears, therefore, to be reason to explore the possible implications of a "postmodern ethics" (Bauman) or an "ethics of deconstruction" (Critchley) for the field of moral development and education.

Admittedly, this is not an easy task. There are complex theoretical and philosophical questions involved in the research on moral development and education. Moreover, the field has accumulated a vast and robust body of empirical research over the years. This requires that both strands, the theoretical and the empirical, are taken into consideration. The project that we envisage -- and of which this paper documents the first step -- consists, therefore, of three parts.

In this paper we critically discuss four issues that, so we believe, structure the current debates on moral development and education. The aim of this paper is first of all to provide an overview of the current state of the field and of the different positions, themes, and issues that are present. On the basis of this we further aim to provide an understanding of the tensions and (unresolved) problems that characterize the field. We are especially interested in the relationship between theoretical and empirical questions. For this reason we approach the field through the question of construct validity. While there is a strong tendency to assume that when discussions come to the point, *empirical* consideration should be decisive, our reconstruction reveals the need for more theoretical and philosophical investigations rather than simply more empirical research. In this respect our analysis clears the stage for a further exploration of the theoretical and philosophical foundations of contemporary research on moral

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development and education. Our analysis also reveals that the way in which main stream empirical research on moral development is conducted, is biased in that it favors a particular conception of morality, and subsequently of moral development and moral education. The strong interaction between method and content is a further reason to return to theoretical and philosophical questions.

In the second part of our project (Mapping the Terrain) we will outline the main features of a postmodern approach to ethics. We will primarily rely on two recent articulations of a postmodern approach that both take their inspiration from the writings of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida. These are Zygmunt Bauman's "postmodern ethics" (Bauman, 1993) and Simon Critchley's "ethics of deconstruction" (Critchley, 1999a). We will argue that the main difference between a modern and postmodern approach to ethics is not to be found in the motivation or direction of the respective approaches, since both approaches seem to be motivated by concerns for justice and responsibility. The main difference, so we will argue, resides in the theoretical and philosophical means that are being used to articulate and pursue these concerns. A main feature of the modern approach to ethics is that it relies upon the Cartesian-Kantian, consciousness-centered tradition in modern philosophy, which takes the ego-cogito as its philosophical point of departure, thereby assuming the priority of ontology, i.e., questions about being, over ethics. In contrast, a postmodern approach to ethics fully recognizes the decentered character of human subjectivity, that is, the fact that the ego-cogito is not *sui generis*, i.e., not its own origin. A postmodern ethics argues for the priority of ethics over ontology, and hence, for the priority of the moral over the cognitive domain. Notably, a postmodern approach does not aim at finding a new foundation for ethics, but emphasizes the constant need to overcome and subvert the foundational moment in ethics for the sake of ethics itself.

In the third part of our project (Shifting the Terrain) we return to the four issues of part one. Our leading question will be to what extent and in what respect the postmodern approach makes a difference with respect to the issues under discussion. In this way, we attempt to gain insight into the particular strength and viability of the postmodern approach to ethics. We will argue that most of the problems that are at stake in contemporary debates of moral development and education stem from typically modern assumptions. As a postmodern approach to ethics forwards other assumptions, its strength and viability should not only be evaluated in terms of "new answers for old questions", but also in terms of "raising new questions". We will contend that a postmodern approach to ethics makes

some questions obsolete, and in the same move introduces new and different questions, issues and points of major concern into the debate. Along these lines we aim to show how and to what extent a postmodern approach to ethics may contribute to the ongoing debate about moral development and education.

THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

In the following pages we discuss four issues that, to our understanding, are central in the current research on moral development and education. The issues are (1) the question of the demarcation of the moral domain, (2) the question of the relationship between "is" and "ought", (3) the question of moral motivation, and (4) the question of moral relativism. We are especially interested in the relationship between the findings of empirical research and the outcomes of theoretical and philosophical investigations. We approach this relationship through the question of construct validity. In developmental psychology it has been widely acknowledged that construct validation extends beyond empirical data analysis, that it should involve critical-theoretical understanding, and that it requires justification of both research methods and the way to which theoretical terms are translated into observables (e.g. Cook & Campbell, 1979; Cronbach & Meehl, 1955; Nunally, 1978). In moral psychology, the branch of developmental psychology concerned with moral development and education, there is also a growing awareness that empirical research should be informed by philosophical investigation in order to clarify the meaning of central concepts and ideas (e.g. Saltzstein, 1997; Tugendhat, 1990; Vandenberg, 1999; Williams & Gannt, 1998; Wren, 1990). Our question, therefore, is: how do empirical and theoretical lines of research "interact" in the current research on moral development and education?

The theories that figure in our review include Kohlberg's stage theory of moral reasoning in terms of justice, Rest's four component model of moral functioning, Blasi's model of the moral self, Gibbs' integrationist sociomoral theory, Gilligan's ethic of care, Eisenberg's approach to prosocial reasoning, Turiel's domain approach of social knowledge, as well as theories of prosocial behavior, moral emotion (empathy, shame and guilt), moral character (virtues), and critical thinking. All cited theories can be regarded as first-order ethical theories so as to distinguish them from metaethical

theories, such as naturalism, intuitionism, emotivism, prescriptivism, and neonaturalism. Whereas first-order, normative ethical theory could be considered as the effort to formulate well-grounded and acceptable norms or principles for acting morally, metaethics focuses on the meaning and justifiability of moral judgments and claims, taking epistemological and anthropological assumptions into account (e.g. Darwall, Gibbard, & Railton, 1997; Van Haaften, 1986)[1]. We will pay attention to both types of theories, as some issues under investigation can only be discussed with reference to metaethical theory.

We take Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental approach to moral judgement (Kohlberg, 1981; Kohlberg et al., 1987) as our point of reference. The reason for this is, firstly, that Kohlberg's theory has dominated the field of moral psychology during the past thirty years. Secondly, Kohlberg's approach provides for the most elaborate empirical research program in moral psychology, and it could be considered as one of the clearest examples of modern ethical theory, being deeply rooted in Kantian formalism, Piaget's genetic structuralism, Rawls' theory of justice, and the philosophy of Habermas (Bergling, 1981; De Mul, 1986; Lapsley, 1996). Thirdly, the debates about the four issues under investigation have often been centered around Kohlberg's theory. Fourthly, it appears that no other developmental psychologist has been as explicit as Kohlberg regarding the meta-ethical assumptions underlying modern ethical theory.

According to Kohlberg, behavior can only be moral if it is motivated by moral judgment, which derives its moral character from formal criteria, such as impartiality, universalizability, and prescriptive role-taking. Assessed by means of hypothetical dilemmas, Kohlberg discerns an invariant sequence of six hierarchically ordered stages of moral reasoning, consisting of three levels, namely: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional. At the preconventional level "moral" rules and norms are imposed from the outside by authority figures, at the conventional level these rules and norms are internalized, and at the postconventional level autonomous self-chosen principles gain priority over heteronomous authority. Each stage is considered as more adaptive than the preceding stage. Stage six represents the moral point of view, that is, the moral ideal, including respect for persons, justice, and benevolence (Kohlberg, Boyd, & Levine, 1990). The stages are supposed to be content- and context-independent,

[1] It should be noted that the distinction between first and second order ethical theory builds on the fundamental difference between theorizing about ethical discourse and participating in it (Hudson, 1983). Though this difference may be arguable, we will provisionally adhere to it for the sake of argument.

forming so-called "structured wholes", which implies that individuals reason about different moral issues according to an underlying organization of thought representative of a specific moral stage. Though the "structured whole" assumption has been heavily criticized and probably needs accommodation (e.g. Beck et al., 1999, Krebs et al., 1991), the empirical support for Kohlberg's basic theoretical assumptions is compelling (see Snarey, 1985, for a review).

Issue 1: Demarcation of the moral domain

In moral psychology, the adequacy of any conceptualization of the moral domain, that is, whether or not constructs have been adequately represented by observables in terms of under- or overrepresentation, is decided upon the conclusiveness of both theoretical argument and empirical evidence. If the moral domain is too narrowly construed, so it is argued, we may unduly restrict the range of problems that "should" count as morally relevant, and unjustly downgrade perspectives, motivations, judgments, desires and aversions as morally irrelevant (Campbell & Christopher, 1996a, Lapsley, 1996). Alternatively, if the moral domain is too broadly construed, far too much could be conceived of as morally relevant, which might blur important distinctions between domains of interest (Helwig, Turiel, & Nucci, 1996).

Kohlberg's stage theory of justice reasoning has been criticized for both under-representing and over-representing the moral domain. Rest's four component model of moral functioning[2] (Rest, Thoma, & Edwards, 1997, Rest, Thoma, Narvaez, & Bebeau, 1997), Blasi's model of the moral self[3]

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[2] Rest (1984) distinguishes between four processes, i.e. components, which are important for the production of moral behavior. The first component includes "person perception, role taking, and imagining consequences of action". The second component concerns "the relative strength of competing moral claims". The third component involves "choosing to do the moral line of action instead of doing other actions that serve other values". The fourth component entails "self-regulation and executive skills to carry out the intention". Only the second component corresponds with Kohlberg's theory.

[3] Blasi's (1983) theory of the moral self is based on seven propositions: (1) moral actions are responses to situations as interpreted according to moral reasoning structures; (2) moral action directly depends on the moral choice, i.e., on the content; (3) moral action may be influenced by responsibility judgements; (4) the general criteria that underlie responsibility judgements are related to one's self-definition; (5) the transition from responsibility to action is supported by the tendency toward self-consistency; (6) consistency between moral judgment and action will be higher in the degree that the individual has attitudes and strategies to deal with interferences from conflicting needs; (7) following an action inconsistent with one's judgement of responsibility, guilt is experienced as an emotional response to the inconsistency within the self.

(Blasi, 1983), Gibbs' sociomoral theory[4] (Gibbs, 1991), and Eisenberg's approach to positive justice reasoning[5] (Eisenberg, 1986) are all attempts to enlarge the moral domain. Rest and Blasi maintain that ego-processes fulfill a prominent role in moral functioning, as these processes facilitate moral perception, and are thought to provide for the missing link between moral cognition and moral behavior. In the first place, a situation should be appraised as a moral situation. In the second place, it is imperative to choose between competing moral claims, and between moral and nonmoral lines of action. In the third place, the moral choice, informed by moral cognition, must be implemented. This might require ego-strength, that is, perseverance and courage. Gibbs seeks to integrate Kohlberg's cognitive approach with a theory emphasizing affective sources of moral behavior. Eisenberg focuses on positive justice reasoning, associated with prosocial behaviors such as helping and sharing, in contrast with Kohlberg who mainly focuses on prohibition moral reasoning, informed by abstract formal principles, obligations, and duties.

Turiel aims at limiting the moral domain by distinguishing between two separate domains of social knowledge which have been, according to Turiel, incorrectly conflated by Kohlberg, namely, morality and social convention[6] (Turiel, 1983; Turiel & Smetena, 1998). Turiel holds that the moral domain is constituted by rules which are conceived as prescriptive, universalizable, and context-free. Moral transgressions prototypically involve violations of other's rights and welfare. In contrast, the conventional domain is constituted by rules which are conceived as context-specific, and which gain force by agreement or practice. Conventional transgressions are judged as rule contingent, and under authority jurisdiction (Turiel, 1983; Turiel, Hilderbrandt, & Wainryb, 1991). Except for some instances, such as wearing pyjamas at school, under normal conditions moral rule transgressions are

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[4] Gibbs (1991) aims at integrating Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory and Hoffman's moral socialization theory.

[5] Eisenberg (1986) distinguishes between five levels of prosocial reasoning: (1) hedonistic, self-focused orientation; (2) needs-oriented orientation; (3) approval and interpersonal orientation; (4) self-reflective empathic orientation; (5) strongly internalized stage, characterized by self-respect and living up to one's values.

[6] Turiel (1983) discerns seven stages of social-conventional reasoning: age 6-7, convention describes uniform behavior; age 8-9, conventional acts are arbitrary; age 10-11, conventions are followed because that is what is expected by those in authority; age 12-13, convention are social expectations; age 14-16, conventions are norms in social systems; age 17-18, norms serve to maintain social systems; age 18-25, conventions are shared knowledge facilitating social interaction.

perceived as more serious than social-conventional rule transgressions (e.g. Nucci & Turiel, 1978, Nucci & Weber, 1995). In each separate domain, children are thought to develop according to distinctively different processes.

According to Kohlberg, only in late adolescence or adulthood, at the post-conventional level of justice reasoning, moral rules and social conventions may become appraised as separate domains of social knowledge. In other words, the ability to distinguish between the social-conventional and moral domain develops with age. In a vast body of empirical research, however, Turiel and coworkers found evidence that even preschool and elementary school aged children were able to differentiate between moral rules and social conventions, both conceptually and in terms of different social interactions in response to moral and social-conventional rule transgressions (Helwig, Tisak, & Turiel, 1990, Killen, 1991, Nucci & Weber, 1995, Smetena, 1995, Smetena et al., 1999, Tisak, 1995). On the basis of these results, it was concluded that morality and social-convention could be considered as separate domains of social knowledge.

Notably, Turiel's research program has been criticized for begging the question, that is, for specifying an a priori classification of developmental domains on the basis of criteria which are external to "the knowing subjects" under investigation (e.g. Campbell & Christopher, 1996a, p.16), and for not adequately taking into account young children's moral intentions (Fowler, 1998). Turiel et al. have defended themselves by stating that the moral and social-conventional domains were discovered inductively, and by pointing at some kind of bootstrapping procedure, in which "definitions and data interpretations feedback on each other" (Helwig et al. 1996, p. 87). Fowlers critique is possibly met by a study, cited in Turiel and Smetena (1998), which attempts to demonstrate that the coordination of intentions and perceived consequences differs from moral to conventional events.

While Kohlberg's approach assumes that morality is an aspect of social development, and is other-regarding, Campbell and Christopher (1996a) assume that morality should be conceived of in terms of personality development, and that it is basically self-regarding. As such, they embrace individualist eudonism (e.g. Den Uyl, 1991, Rasmussen & Den Uyl, 1991), advocate respect for individual rights, and distance themselves from Kantian formalism in that morality cannot be equated with the application of rules and principles. Campbell and Christopher (1996a) contend that not all moral problems are social. For instance, "being honest with one self" is both a moral and personal issue.

They even emphasize that "moral development is personality development", which implies that morality is basically concerned with personal well-being, self-actualization, and "the sorts of persons we would like to be" (p. 38). In their view, moral development is concerned with the cultivation of moral character, namely, the development of "self-referential values", i.e., traditional virtues, and "the self". Campbell and Christopher's (1996b) final conclusion is that "the self" should not be divided into a moral and nonmoral part, and that in some cases moral values may not be "good, right, beneficial, or acceptable from a normative point of view": there exists both "pathological moral development" and "evil systems of morality" (p. 118/119). Interestingly, in an empirical study that was carried out by Blair, Jones, Clark, and Smith (1995), tellingly entitled "is the psychopath morally insane?", deviant behavior was explained in terms pathological moral development.

Finally, demarcation of the moral domain often proceeds by distinguishing between cognitivist theories that advocate formal principles and universalism on the one hand, and emotivist or behavioral theories that focus on moral content and situational specificity on the other hand. Theories that primarily focus on content are concerned with care[*] (Gilligan, 1982), prosocial behavior[*] (Rheingold, 1982), empathy[*] (Hoffman, 1991), moral emotions such as shame and guilt (Tangney, 1995), as well as moral character and virtues (Carr, 1991; MacIntyre, 1981; Sandin, 1992; Walker & Pitts, 1998).

The contrast between the emotional and cognitive account of morality has been radicalized in the debate between Gilligan's "feminine" ethic of care, which emphasizes attachment and affective interconnection, and Kohlberg's "masculine" ethic of justice, which emphasizes separation and individuation. The care-justice debate attracted much attention during the 1980's, but has presently lost much of its (critical) impact. This may be due to the sparse evidence of sex-bias in scoring procedures based on Kohlberg's theory (e.g. Lollis et al., 1999; Rest, 1983; Walker, 1984,1989), and the cognitive

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Gilligan contends that Kohlberg's theory is valid only for measuring a liberal conception of justice, with its deontological emphasis on rights, and "free" contractual agreements between autonomous subjects. Gilligan, however, maintains that the moral domain should be enlarged by an ethic of care and responsibility, which is sensitive to "the moral voice" of women (Gilligan, 1982).

[*] Prosocial behavior should be defined as any behavior that is intended to benefit another (Lapsley, 1996).

[*] Hoffman's moral socialization theory focuses on the internalization of cultural norms and values by means of parental discipline techniques that emphasize the effects of the child's behavior on others, and thereby foster empathy and feelings of guilt as "affective sources of moral motivation" (Gibbs, 1991; Hoffman, 1987).

elaboration of Gilligan's ethic of care in moral psychology's measurement procedures (Skoe, 1998).

Nowadays, the existence of a separate justice-rights and care-responsibility orientation has become well established in moral psychology, while there is growing empirical evidence that the adequate coordination of both orientations could be regarded as indicative of moral maturity (e.g. Walker, De Vries, & Trevethan, 1987). The most convincing evidence of sex-differences derives from studies which found that women generated more personal real-life dilemmas in comparison with men, which even could be considered as a cultural artifact (see Skoe et al., 1999). Furthermore, there is some empirical support for the idea that an ethic of care is more central to the self-concept of women than to the self-concept of men (Skoe & Diessner, 1994).

Benhabib's (1992) non-cognitive reading of Gilligan's ethic of care fully preserves its critical potential, and challenges modern ethical theory in a fundamental way. In a discussion of Kohlberg's ethic of justice and Gilligan's ethic of care, Benhabib (1992) questions the epistemic assumptions underlying Kohlberg's universalizability procedure, which intends to secure a moral decision that is just and acceptable for all. According to Benhabib, this procedure is invalidly build on the standpoint of the generalized other, that is, a free and rational being who is stripped of his "concrete history, identity and affective-emotional constitution" (ibid, p. 159). If we abstract from the concrete other, Benhabib argues, "no coherent universalizability test can ban carried out, for we lack the necessary epistemic information to judge my moral situation to be 'like' or 'unlike' yours" (ibid, p. 164).

To summarize, in moral psychology the moral domain debate in concerned with the establishment of the inner and outer limits of the moral domain, in particular in order to be able to validly define moral terms. As it seems impossible to formulate a definite set of necessary and sufficient conditions to define the moral domain (Everitt & Fisher, 1995), the domain debate appears to be unresolvable. The domain definitions remain open concepts which balance between fuzziness if the domain contains far too much, and clearness but inapplicability if the domain contains far too little. While a broad conception of the moral domain risks colonizing possible "non-moral issues", a narrow construal of the moral domain risks relegating potential "moral issues" to the domain of moral irrelevance.

This raises the question whether empirical data can establish a decision about the borders of the moral domain. As Siegel (1981) argues, empirical findings cannot have any bearing on moral theory.

since there seems no way for empirical psychology to avoid invalidly deriving "ought" from "is". Therefore, according to Siegel, empirical research can only be regarded as appropriate for gaining knowledge of the *processes* that facilitate critical thinking.[10] In a similar vein, Van Haaften (1997) argues that the moral domain discussion is basically a conceptual issue which cannot be resolved empirically. According to Van Haaften, the task of moral psychology primarily consists in explaining actual developmental processes which have been defined in the logic of the theory, that part of the theory which deals with the definition of the domain of interest, and the conceptual reconstruction of the developmental stages. Notably, Siegel's and Van Haaften's arguments imply the relative autonomy of empirical research and philosophical justification, and thereby represent a distinct position in the "is-ought" debate. This debate will be explored in the next paragraph.

One final observation: when the moral domain has finally become established, access to the moral debate can be regulated on the basis of what is excluded from the moral domain. For instance, in Kohlberg's approach all people capable of reasoning and willing to participate in rational deliberation (see Honig, 1993) are allowed access to the moral debate. Unfortunately, many of them become disqualified as morally immature beforehand, as the "true" moral point of view appears to be within reach of a small economic and cultural elite only, in particular to be found in modern western societies. If it is a feature of modern ethical theory that the meaning of moral discourse is established in advance, together with the arguments which "should" count as valid, and the issues which "should" count as moral, important assumptions underpinning modern ethical theory risk to be severely violated, in particular Habermas' constitutive ideal of the power-free community of communication (Habermas, 1983, 1993), and Kohlberg's stage six telos of moral development, including respect for persons.

Issue 2: The Gap between Facts and Values

The division between facts and values or descriptive and evaluative meaning, that is, the "unbridgeable" gap between "what is the case" and "what ought to be the case", is a central problem in modern ethical

[10] According to Siegel, moral education is justified in terms of the obligation to help children to become rational agents, that is, critical thinkers, as "being rational involves (in part) being moral" (Siegel, 1981). Siegel maintains that rationality, which includes critical thinking, is prior to ideology and commitment, as "one must take rationality, and reasons, seriously in order even to raise the question of the possible influence of ideology on the evaluation of reasons. So, the possibility of the non-ideological rational critique of ideology is basic to the very possibility of inquiry into the nature of ideology" (Siegel, 1987, p. 162/163).

theory. Historically, the stage has been set by Hume's frequently cited "is-ought" passage in "a treatise of human nature" (see Hudson, 1983, p. 253), Kant's divide between the noumenal and phenomenal will (Biesta, 1991), and Moore's account of the naturalistic fallacy in "principia ethica" (Moore, 1903). The problem can be stated in three different ways. Firstly: how can we derive an evaluative conclusion from a set of factual premises, and in Kohlberg's terms, "get away with it" (Kohlberg, 1981)?[11] Secondly: how can the adjective "good" be identical with some descriptive property P, say "pleasure", without falling into an infinite regress, for the question whether or not P is really "good" remains intelligible and logically open (Moore, 1903)? Or thirdly, a radical question that is prompted by the philosophies of Derrida and Levinas: is it possible to ground ethics in a theory about the human subject, or alternatively, some kind of anthropology or ontology, without "invalidly" deriving "ought" from "is"?

Moral psychology, deeply rooted as it is in modern ethical theory, has involuntarily inherited the "is-ought" question, and cannot dispose of it for reasons we have already alluded to in the preceding paragraph. The answer to the "is-ought" question determines whether or not empirical research can inform us about the meaning of morality, and as such sets the task for moral psychology. In moral psychology, the "is-ought" question has only been under direct scrutiny by Kohlberg, who, unlike other moral theorists, aimed to be explicit as to the metaethical assumptions underlying his moral theory. Before evaluating Kohlberg's position, we will first explore how modern metaethical theory deals with the "is-ought" question, distinguishing between five metaethical positions: naturalism, intuitionism, emotivism, prescriptivism, and neo-naturalism (Brandt, 1996, Darwall, Gibbard, and Railton, 1997; Hudson, 1983; Singer, 1993). For the moment, it suffices to remark that all modern approaches to moral development and education, as found in moral psychology, rely on assumptions that stem from one or more of these metaethical positions.

Whereas hard-line naturalism maintains that moral discourse can be wholly described in terms of an empiricist language without loss of meaning, thereby committing the naturalistic fallacy in the most direct way, this view is heavily contested by intuitionism, emotivism, and prescriptivism, but for different reasons. Common to intuitionism, emotivism, and prescriptivism is the assumption that "what

[11] In terms of formal logic, deriving an evaluative conclusion from only factual premises is building an invalid syllogism.

ought to be the case" cannot simply be reduced to "what is the case", though facts of the matter should not be denied their role in moral discourse. Neonaturalistic theories attempt to bridge the gulf between fact and value by grounding morality in (virtuous) wants and aversions, man's telos, some form of epistemological realism, institutional fact, or stipulative definition[12].

Intuitionism (Prichard, 1949; Ross, 1939) holds that the meaning of "good" is to be found in nonnatural properties that are sui generis, and which can be known by moral sense. Intuitionism has been criticized for reasons such as the adherence to a referential theory of meaning, the reliance on self-evidence, and the failure to account for moral motivation (Dancy, 1993; Hare, 1993; Hudson, 1983).

Emotivism (Stevenson, 1944) states that moral judgment is not used to describe natural or nonnatural facts, but to create an influence. As such, moral utterances can be interpreted as expressions of feelings. For example: "democracy is good" means "democracy hooray!" Though emotivism may put forward a clear account of moral motivation, some criticisms have been found difficult to cope with. Firstly, emotivism confuses reasons with causes, and falsely assumes that one cannot reason about moral issues (Hare, 1993). Secondly, emotivism incorrectly relies on a psychological theory of meaning, in which the meaning of moral discourse is determined by psychological processes that guide communication in terms of the (intended) effects of language. The meaning of language, however, rather appears to be determined by semantic and syntactic conventions than by psychological processes. So, what causes someone to say "abortion is wrong" and the effects on the hearer of such a statement do not make any difference to the meaning of the sentence "abortion is wrong", it remains perfectly intelligible. It is important to notice that the emotivist subscription to a psychological theory of meaning reduces moral discourse to contingent fact, thereby committing the naturalistic fallacy (Hudson, 1983).

Prescriptivism (Hare, 1952, 1963, 1981) is grounded in a doctrine of principled reasoning, which is reminiscent of the Kantian autonomous agent who acts on self-adopted universal laws derived from a non-empirical, noumenal world which is free from inclination and desire. Though, according to

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[12] Whereas naturalism, neonaturalism, and intuitionism may be considered as descriptive theories, either because morality is logically grounded in descriptions of natural or nonnatural fact (Hudson, 1983) or because the meaning of moral discourse is entirely determined by truth conditions (Hare, 1993), emotivism and prescriptivism could be regarded as non-descriptive theories. Non-descriptivism holds that moral discourse has both descriptive and evaluative meaning. Therefore, moral discourse not only refers to facts of the matter, but, most importantly, is also capable of expressing attitudes pro or con unconstrained by questions of truth and falsity.

Hare, moral language refers to facts of the matter, inclinations, and interests, the primary use of moral judgment remains prescriptive. Moral discourse is supervenient or consequential upon natural description, which is evidenced by the appeal to reasons when moral judgments are being delivered. Those reasons, which must pass the universalizability test in order to gain authority, entail natural descriptions that invoke general criteria and principles for choosing between actions and states of affairs. Therefore, prescriptive meaning is irreducible to descriptive meaning: "when I subscribe to the principle, I do not state a fact, but make a moral decision" (Hare, 1952, p.196), a decision that has overriding force (Hare, 1981). Universalizability implies that one should go the round of all the affected parties, giving equal weight to the interests of all (Hare, 1963). At this point, universal prescriptivism leads to some kind of preference utilitarianism (Hare, 1981; Hudson, 1983, p.228)[13]. Finally, according to Hare, moral reasoning consists of two levels, namely, intuitive and critical thinking (Hare, 1981). At the intuitive level, moral thinking is characterized by the unquestioned adherence to generally accepted principles of right and wrong. At the critical level all the relevant facts are under investigation, while moral thinking derives its rational and critical character from the logic of prescriptivity and universalizability. Freedom is most basically being secured by the infinite re-appraisal of moral judgment in critical thinking, exposing oneself maximally to "logic and the facts" (Hare, 1981).

Neonaturalism purports to bridge (reduce) or eliminate the logical gap between "is" and "ought" without committing the naturalistic fallacy. Clear examples of elimination can be found in statements of institutional fact, and in stipulative definition. For instance, Searle (1969) seeks to deduce "ought" from the institutional fact of promising by asserting that the speech act of promising implies that promises ought to be kept. Gewirth (1978) proceeds in a somewhat different way. He offers a definition of "action" in terms of voluntary and purposive behavior. Subsequently, well-being, defined as the capability of such behavior, and freedom are considered as necessary conditions of action. From this, according to Gewirth, it follows that an agent cannot deny, on pain of self-contradiction, that freedom and well-being are good. Apparently, Searle and Gewirth can be criticized for begging the

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[13] At first sight, teleological utilitarianism appears to deviate from Kant's deontological moral philosophy in a fundamental way. Kant's categorical imperative, however, can be rephrased in utilitarian terms, in accordance with the greatest happiness principle in rule-utilitarianism (Sullivan, 1994). Moreover, Hare contends that Kantian moral reasoning yields conclusions with a content that could be explained in utilitarian terms (Hare, 1981, p. 4/5). Therefore, Hare's preference utilitarian account of prescriptivism in "moral thinking" (1981) may well square with Kant's deontological moral philosophy.

question, since they both start from an "is" that is also an "ought", and rely on presupposed moral principles which are encapsulated in the meaning of "promising" and "acting", respectively (Hudson, 1983, Van Haaften, 1984). Moreover, it always remains possible to distinguish between fact and value, and to question the principles or criteria on which moral judgments are based (Hare, 1963, Hudson, 1983). The same critique applies to words that bear both descriptive and evaluative meaning, and designate virtues such as courage, temperance, prudence, etcetera.

Moral realists conflate "is" and "ought" by conceptualizing ought-statements as natural properties that can be true or false. Most moral realists rely on some kind of naturalized epistemology (e.g. Quine, 1969), in which the emphasis is rather put on the causes of our beliefs than on their justification, thus clearing the way for both phenomenological description and empirical hypotheses-testing research in epistemology and moral philosophy. Naturalized epistemology assumes that reality is prior to thought, and that it is congruent with the moral realist's account of the gestalt-like immediate knowledge of moral facts. This immediate moral knowledge could best be conceived of as "theory-determined intuition", equivalent with "epistemically reliable trained judgements" (Boyd, 1997). The process by which to arrive at such reliable, correct or true moral judgments is supposed to be found in a realist conception of wide reflective equilibrium[14], which consists of "the dialectical interplay of observations, theory, and methodology" (Boyd, 1997, p. 119). The major problems of moral realism appear to reside in the absence of "credible" self-evident or true moral beliefs[15], and the failure of any attempt to demonstrate that value properties are identical to natural properties[16] (Brandt, 1996). Furthermore, it remains unclear whatever may be the meaning of moral terms.

Other examples of neonaturalism can be found in attempts to ground morality in a motivational

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[14] Reflective equilibrium, as originally conceived of by Rawls (1971), represents the reflective interaction between a person's general ethical principles and his intuitions. Narrow reflective equilibrium can be considered as a more or less consistent set of moral beliefs based "not reflected upon" present knowledge, and which may be equated with moral opinion. Wide reflective equilibrium represents a unified, coherent set of beliefs, which results from an inquiry into all the relevant facts and arguments.

[15] "The wide reflective equilibrium of a set of beliefs does not justify the belief that any of them is true" (Brandt, 1996, p.178).

[16] The method of reflective equilibrium yields universal statements of the type "X is right/good if and only if Y", but X and Y will never be identical (Brandt, 1996, p. 171).

account of morality, defined in terms of (virtuous) wants and aversions (Brandt, 1996, Carr, 1991, Foot, 1978, Sanding, 1992, Steutel, 1992), or a teleological, Aristotelian account of morality (Geach, 1956, MacIntyre, 1981).

The motivational account of morality hinges on the idea that "universal and ultimate" wants, such as freedom from pain and incapacity, and aversions, like the abhorrence of being injured by other people, provide noncontentious and therefore conclusive reasons for "ought". In other words, morality is thought to consist in "virtuous" wants and aversions to act in desirable ways, coupled with corresponding emotions of remorse (e.g. shame and guilt) or disapproval (e.g. contempt) if acting inappropriately. It appears to us that a motivational account of morality cannot bridge the gap between "is" and "ought", as it remains intelligible to ask why we should want, or have aversions to, certain types of acts or events. Furthermore, statements of the form "you ought to do X if and only if you have certain wants or aversions" cannot build a relation of identity between "is" and "ought".

The teleological account of morality purports to bridge the gap between "is" and "ought" by considering man as a functional concept, replacing wants and aversions by needs. A man ought to do what promotes the realization of his telos, while needs could be regarded as necessary conditions. According to Geach (1956) certain virtues are needed -- such as temperance, ~~justice~~ prudence, and justice -- to attain the true end, i.e. telos, for which all human beings exist, whatever this telos may be. MacIntyre (1981) contends that moral discourse is factual in that evaluations provide information about the degree to which functions have been performed well. For example, a blunt knife is not a good knife, and a father who spoils his children is not a good father. MacIntyre argues that corrosive individualism and the invention of the pre-social subject have produced the "is-ought" gap, for man ceases to be a functional concept if he is no longer to fulfill his role in forms of social life, such as the family and school community. To continue, MacIntyre emphasizes that there is no private "good": "the fundamental form of human relationship is in terms of shared goods" (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 213). The teleological account of morality does not bridge the "is-ought" gap for the simple reason that man's function or telos necessarily involves an evaluation. If man's telos would not receive any content, as with Geach, it could be argued that the bridge between "is" and "ought" might have been build successfully, but at the extreme cost of trivializing morality to the extent of rendering morality meaningless, Mother Teresa and Hitler being equally moral (Hudson, 1983). So, even Geach' approach

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appears to fail, as moral discourse is being robbed of both its descriptive and evaluative meaning.

So far, it appears that the "is-ought" gap cannot validly be bridged. We will now examine whether or not Kohlberg's approach is successful. Kohlberg explicitly sought to bridge the "is-ought" gap in combining two metaethical positions, namely, prescriptivism and neonaturalism. On the one hand Kohlberg's theory could be regarded as prescriptivistic, as it clearly states that "moral judgements are not true or false in the cognitive-descriptivist sense", and that morality derives its "sui-generis" character from the formalistic criteria of "prescriptivity and universality" (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 169-171)[17]. On the other hand Kohlberg's theory is neonaturalistic, as Kohlberg claims isomorphism of the descriptive-cognitive and moral domain: "any conception of what moral judgment ought to be must rest on an adequate conception of what it is" (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 178)[18].

First of all, it should be noticed that the isomorphism-thesis cannot establish a relation of identity (Boyd, 1990; Siegel, 1981; Van Haaften, 1984, 1997). Kolberg's contention that the cognitive-formal criteria of "differentiation and integration" map into the moral-formal criteria of "prescriptivity and universalizability", does factually imply that psychological-cognitive development is a precondition of moral development. Such conditional relation does not bridge the alleged gap between "is" and "ought". Van Haaften illustrates this point in the following manner: "an increasing capability to reckon with the viewpoints and needs of others is no guarantee that this will be done in a fair manner" (Van Haaften, 1997, p.80). Kohlberg finally admits that the isomorphism-thesis should not be interpreted in terms of identity. He restates the relation between "is" and "ought" in terms of complementarity, which implies that psychological theory, based on propositional truth claims, functions as a check on or provides indirect support for moral theory, although "normative theory still requires philosophic or normative grounding" (ibid., p. 16). Still, Kohlberg's solution seems unsatisfactory, for it is difficult to see how Kohlberg, caught in a position between prescriptivism and neonaturalism, could ever secure the authority of both truth and ought-claims. According to prescriptivism, "ought" should be separated

[17] Hare's distinction between the intuitive and critical level of moral thinking matches Kohlberg's distinction between (pre)conventional and postconventional morality.

[18] "The scientific theory as to why people factually do move upward from stage to stage, and why they factually do prefer a higher stage to a lower, is broadly the same as a moral theory as to why people should prefer a higher stage to al lower" (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 179).

from "is" so that "ought-claims function to cast doubt on the legitimacy or acceptability of the facts of the case, not the other way around" (Boyd, 1990, p. 142). According to neonaturalism, however, "is" and "ought" should be inseparable so that empirical evidence can be conclusive, and so that empirical research can have a direct impact on normative theory. It needs no further clarification that prescriptivism and neonaturalism represent incompatible metaethical positions. Hence, it appears that the complementarity-thesis, which assumes a middle position between prescriptivism and neonaturalism, can only encourage moral psychologists and philosophers to listen to each other, without the prospect of real understanding.

Perhaps the most promising way to bridge the "is-ought" gap resides in a transcendental-genetic strategy (ibid., 1997) which is based on the evaluative claim that, on pain of falling into a performative contradiction, the more advanced developmental stage "cannot reasonably not be preferred" (ibid., p. 85) as more adequate than the less advanced stage. The problem is, however, that the transcendental-genetic strategy presupposes domain-specific foundational principles of rationality, and that it presupposes "the very development to be justified"; hence, it is questionable whether the transcendental-genetic strategy is applicable within the moral domain (ibid, p. 88; see also Biesta & Stams, in press).

If the gap between "is" and "ought" cannot validly be bridged, and if the relation between "is" and "ought" cannot fruitfully be conceptualized in terms of complementarity, we seem to be led, once more, to the conclusion that moral psychology's task is restricted to describing the psychological *processes* that facilitate moral development and education (Van Haaften, 1997) or critical thinking (Siegel, 1981).

With respect to construct validity, moral psychology is certainly downgraded by an account of the "is-ought" question which cannot validly bridge the gulf between "is" and "ought". Though moral psychologists may successfully probe the empirical relations between morally relevant constructs, thus exploring the nominal network of ethical terms, their research remains fundamentally guided by normative theory to the extent that only philosophy can decide which relations should be tested, and to the extent that empirical facts will always be generated by the normative theory under investigation. It

appears that from an epistemological perspective empirical results can always be discounted as circular, and disqualified as inconclusive. We just fail to see how Kohlberg's bootstrapping- methodology, which should be considered as an empirical translation of the hermeneutic cycle, can avoid epistemic circularity. Nevertheless, Korthals (1989) defends Kohlberg's bootstrapping procedure by arguing that empirical data, i.e., the subject's conceptualizations of what may count as moral reasons, can always contradict the normative standard under investigation. However, a normative standard -- like the standard distance of a mile -- can never be fully present as an uncontaminated empirical fact. Therefore, the circular bootstrapping between empirical data and normative theory, in order to obtain "progressively closer approximations of an accurate account" (Colby, 1978, p. 90), seems invalid.

Issue 3: Moral Action

This paragraph focuses on the explanation of moral action, which in moral psychology is conceived in terms of the relation between "moral motivation" and "morally relevant behavior." In moral psychology, this relation is considered to be fundamental, both empirically and conceptually, to the adequate description of any nominal network (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955) that attempts to map the field of moral development and education. Moral motivation has been conceptualized in terms of moral cognition, moral emotions such as empathy, sympathy, compassion, shame, and guilt[19], and in terms of moral virtue or character. Morally relevant behavior includes delinquent behavior, antisocial behavior, and prosocial behavior such as sharing, caring and helping. In this paragraph, we will primarily focus on conceptual problems regarding the use of the terms "moral motivation" and "morally relevant behavior" in connection with some basic methodological and theoretical assumptions underlying empirical research on moral development and education. But first of all, we will briefly examine the empirical findings regarding the alleged link between "moral motivation" and "morally relevant behavior."

The empirical evidence for relations between on the one hand moral cognition and moral emotion and on the other hand "morally relevant behavior" is abundant, with effect sizes ranging from small to moderate (e.g. Blasi, 1980, Nelson, Smith & Dodd, 1990, Skoe & Von der Lippe, 1998,

[19] The standard picture appears to be that emotions can only be moral if they motivate moral behavior, or alternatively, if they can be considered as a response to moral misbehavior, acting against moral values. In both cases, and that is fundamental, there is a close connection between moral behaviors and moral emotions.

Smetana, 1990, Tangney, 1995, Van IJzendoorn, 1998). Moreover, these relations have been successfully linked to parents' role in their children's moral development (e.g. Berkowitz & Grych, 1998, Eisenberg & Murphy, 1995, Smetena, 1995,1999, Walker & Hennig, 1999). Empirical evidence for a relation between moral virtue/character and moral behavior is sparse, if not absent, which may be attributed to a common difficulty in the measurement of human traits (Lapsley, 1996).

Though most moral psychologists agree that morality is supposed to be concerned with questions about how we ought to behave towards each other, and that only behavior which is "internally motivated" or "performed for internal reasons" could be morally relevant, as contrasted with behavior which is imposed from the outside or behavior which is motivated by external reinforcement (Eisenberg & Murphy, 1995), some important disagreements remain. Firstly, there is disagreement about the type of internal motivations that may count as moral. Secondly, there is disagreement about whether or not behavior can be considered as "morally relevant" solely by virtue of specific intrinsic features.

Kohlberg's cognitive developmental approach assumes that behavior can only be moral if it is motivated by moral cognition. In a double movement, moral knowledge not only defines which actions are morally relevant, but it also motivates moral action (Blasi, 1983). Turiel, however, maintains that behavior which involve others' rights and welfare, and which satisfy specific objective criteria, such as rule and authority independence, should be considered as "morally relevant" irrespective of possible antecedent motivations (see Smetana, 1995). Emler and Reicher (1995) appear to somewhat sidestep this discussion, as they explain "morally relevant" behavior, such as adolescent delinquency, in terms of its communicative meaning. They reject the mainstream focus on internally and externally motivating factors, i.e., internal and social control, and understand "deviant" adolescent behavior in terms of social identity, reputation management, and opposition to formal authority. Emler and Reicher relate adolescent delinquency to unfavorable societal conditions. In doing so, they tend to consider "deviant" behavior in morally neutral terms, interpreting the unfavorable societal conditions which are thought to underlie high rates of youth delinquency from a moral-political perspective. As such, their model of adolescent delinquency is in line with a vast body of research demonstrating the negative effects of poverty or impoverished social conditions on the incidence of antisocial and delinquent behavior in youths (e.g. Pagani, Boulerice, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 1999).

It should be noted that Kohlberg's position, or any other position in which antecedent moral motivations constitute the necessary conditions for moral behavior to be truly "moral", raises an issue of main methodological importance. Notably, in the empirical study of moral development and education, it is imperative that the independent variables -- such as moral cognition, moral emotion, or moral virtue/character -- be independently defined from the dependent variables concerning "morally relevant" behavior. If not, circularity could be the result, and the strength of found associations risks being inflated by contamination of measures. It may even be the case that confirmation of the hypothesized relations between (antecedent) moral motivations and (consequent) moral behavior will only reflect some kind of analytical truth, with measurement error uniquely accounting for imperfect associations.

This situation, sketched above, parallels a problem encountered by internalist approaches to morality, such as Kohlberg's, which assume that a "free and rational" agent cannot act contrary to his moral judgment on pain of self-contradiction. It needs no arguing, however, that people often fail to do what is morally required according to their best judgment, following a line of action they appear to have no good reasons for. Moreover, it is difficult to see how internalism could account for someone who chooses evil? Immoralists, such as Hagen and Loge in Wagner's Ring des Nibelungen or Shakespeare's Richard III, must first acquire full moral knowledge in order to be able to pursue evil in its purest form. Their moral understanding is complete, but they desire to act contrary to it.

In moral psychology, imperfect relations between moral judgment (competence) and moral behavior (performance) have been ascribed to the following factors: 1) moral behavior is multiple determined so that non-moral considerations, such as self-interest or social-convention, may be more salient and override moral considerations, 2) successfully acting on a moral choice is dependent on psychological factors, such as ego-strength, courage, intelligent planning or ego-control, 3) moral behavior is content-specific while cognitive structures are formal, 4) moral behavior is context-sensitive and is adapted to and influenced by the social environment, 5) the chosen dependent variables don't adequately represent "morally relevant" behavior, 6) in some kind of Humean way moral cognition (beliefs) need to be supplemented by moral emotions or desires in order to be action-guiding (Bersoff, 1999, McNaughton, 1988, Tavecchio, Stams, Brugman, & Thomeer-Bouwens, 1999). These explanations are based on a similar idea that moral cognition may be a necessary condition for moral

action, but certainly not a sufficient condition. If internal moral motivations are indeed necessary but not sufficient conditions for moral behavior, this poses a major problem to any modern conception of morality that emphasizes the authority of moral requirements, and that assumes the priority of internal moral motivations in the definition and subsequent explanation of moral behavior.

Where most modern philosophical accounts of morality urge that moral requirements -- deriving from shame, guilt, empathy, compassion, one's moral identity or moral understanding -- unconditionally translate into moral behavior, moral psychology suggests that such situation is highly hypothetical. If it is natural that moral requirements are not sufficient to motivate moral behavior, we are left with the impracticable task to decide how strong a moral motivation should be in order to justify the term "moral action". Or otherwise, how weak a moral motivation should be to justify the term "morally neutral action", how strong an immoral motivation should be to justify the term "immoral action", or alternatively, how immature moral understanding should be to justify the term "moral immature action", etcetera. Notably, and this should be repeated here, the problem derives from the conceptually intimate relation between moral motivation and moral behavior. That is, we are summoned to doubt "moral motivation" if it is not acted upon, and we must question the "moral relevancy" of behavior if antecedent "moral" or "immoral" motivations are lacking. In fact, the bracketing of the qualification "moral" tells the whole story. The problem is, briefly, that in most instances we might not even be allowed to conclude that "prosocial behavior" was partly "morally motivated", as the evaluative, moral meaning of both terms can only be constituted in a perfect correlation. That the meaning of moral motivation and moral behavior is being established in a mutual constitutive relation is quit explicit in the following passage, drawn from Blasi: "Motivation, then, is moral if it leads to actions in their formal moral quality, as morally good or bad. That is, an action must derive intentionally from moral motivation, the agent's reason for the action must also be its motivation, and this motivation-reason must be seen by the agent as morally relevant" (Blasi, 1999, p. 12).

Bersoff (1999) offers a different explanation for moral motivation-behavior inconsistencies. He argues that inconsistencies may not reside in psychological processes that hamper the translation of moral motivation into moral behavior, but in the misinterpretation of unethical action as morally acceptable: self-serving interests induce a false interpretation that facilitates unethical behavior. For instance: shoplifting is misconstrued as proletarian shopping, conceived of as a charge against a society

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that refuses to take responsibility for its poorest members. It is suggested that people use rationalizations and excuses, by means of moral impression management, to enable unethical behavior. Such idea is in line with a functionalist account of morality, outlined by Krebs, Denton and Wark (1997), in which the relation between moral judgment and moral behavior is radically reversed: "anticipated outcomes may give rise to moral choices and moral judgements, rather than follow from them" (p. 138). Krebs et al. lay stress on the adaptive function of morality, and claim that moral judgments serve intellectual functions (e.g. to organize one's moral principles), self-serving functions (e.g. to avoid psychological tension), and social harmony functions (e.g. to uphold normative order), whereby "the consequences of moral decisions" are thought to affect the "forms of moral judgment" (ibid, p. 136). We are curious whether or not Krebs et al. are cognizant of the naturalistic, metaethical implication of their theory."

The primacy of the behavioral side of the coin in moral action is also evident in Turiel's moral domain approach. From this perspective, moral and immoral action may depend on the way in which a situation is understood, that is: involving a moral issue (e.g. harm for others), a personal issue (e.g. personal health, wellbeing or rights), or a social-conventional issue (e.g. social agreements). In clear-cut situations, as far as they might exist, immoral behavior could result from an idiosyncratic misconstrual of a situation as morally neutral where it is not. In equivocal situations, such as abortion, behavior may be influenced by the specific interpretation of the situation as personal, social-conventional or moral. In such indeterminate cases, however, an "objective" criterion to decide whether or not the action is "morally relevant", is unavailable per definition.

Apart from criticisms which imply that attempts to specify a set of necessary and sufficient conditions to define the "moral relevancy" of behavior are fruitless, it also seems questionable whether it is possible to understand "moral" or "deviant" action without taking recourse to underlying motivations. Berard (1998) contends that no behavior is inherently deviant, immoral or moral, but that "the social construction of deviance is an inherently moral and contentious matter" (p. 198). In the "social construction of deviance" motivation plays a defining role in the "mutually constitutive relationship" between the "moral relevance" of a situation, the agent performing a "deviant, "moral" or "immoral" act and his or her motivations as "explanatory devices" (p. 208 to 210). In conclusion, the tight connection between motivation and the evaluation of behavior in terms of "deviance" or "moral

relevance" suggests once more that we cannot define moral and immoral behavior solely on the basis of intrinsic features. As noted before, this is a problem from a methodological point of view, because in the empirical study of moral development and education we should be able to independently define the different variables in a nominal network of relations in order to avoid contamination of measures.

In summary, we have tried to clarify the concept of moral action by inspecting the relations between moral motivation (including moral cognition and moral emotions) and moral behavior. We have shown that the mutual constitutive relation between moral motivation and moral behavior appears to infect moral psychology with problems regarding conceptual circularity, and contamination of measures. Also, we have demonstrated that in order to secure conceptual clarity as well as the authority of morality itself, moral motivation should be both a necessary and sufficient condition for moral behavior (the absolute moral internalist stance). In moral psychology, however, it appears to be an "empirical truth" that moral motivations are not sufficient to motivate moral behavior. As a result, moral psychologists are confronted with the insolvable problem to decide how strong or weak moral and immoral motivations should be in order to be able to justify the use of moral terms in their description of human action.

We observe that moral psychology develops in an externalist direction, which means that moral motivation is regarded as a necessary but not a sufficient condition for moral action. This is most evident in recent integrationist approaches to moral development and education, which emphasize the simultaneous operation of different moral motivations, and which highlight the influence of non-moral psychological processes in terms of ego-strength, coping strategies, identity formation, etcetera (e.g. Blasi, 1999; Gibbs, 1991; Matsuba & Walker, 1998; Rest et al., 1997a/1997b; Saltzstein, 1994; Tavecchio et al., 1999).

Of course, moral psychologists may successfully predict actions which count as delinquent, antisocial, prosocial, or even moral in most societies from several "relevant" predictor variables, including shame, guilt, and positive justice-reasoning. It is a different question, however, whether it is justified to label those actions accordingly, namely, on the basis of what is considered as delinquent, moral, etcetera, in most societies. Such a question boils down to the issue of construct validity, as anyone would like to know if the moral psychologist's account of moral action, e.g. "what counts as moral action in most societies", really represents moral action. Therefore, the moral psychologist must

specify a coherent nominal network of law-like relations in which the meaning of the employed constructs is defined, and in which construct validity is achieved. This task is carried out both empirically and discursively (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). Empirically, by probing convergent, divergent, and predictive validity claims (Cook & Campbell, 1979); discursively, by means of self-critical reflection, interpretation, and laying bare the anthropological and epistemological assumptions underlying the nominal network which is put to a test. In this paragraph we proceeded discursively, and found that moral psychology encounters great difficulties in establishing the construct validity of two central factors deemed essential in the explanation of moral action, that is, moral motivation and moral behavior.

Issue 4: Moral Relativism

Moral relativism, in a metaethical sense, refers to the idea that all conceptions of morality are equally valid, since moral norms and values, as well as moral codes and criteria, are historically and culturally contingent, that is, relative across time and context. In fact, moral relativists consider moral issues to be a matter of opinion, i.e., doxa. Moral relativism is connected with the idea that one should not criticize others for having different moral values, as there seems no way to decide whether or not one's own moral norms and values are the most valid. So, normative moral relativism provides us with reasons for tolerance and non-intervention (Wong, 1993, p. 449). It should be clear at once, however, that the values of tolerance and non-intervention transcend moral relativism, as they cannot be neutrally applied to those who reject the values of tolerance and non-intervention. Therefore, normative moral relativism appears to be caught into a firm contradiction.

The counterpart of moral relativism is moral universalism. Moral universalism implies that there are universal moral concepts, values and principles, which are objectively valid. In contrast with "dogmatic" moral relativism, which renders all idiosyncratic opinions and social conventions equally valid, moral universalism emphasizes objective moral knowledge, that is, episteme. In moral psychology, Kohlberg's theory can be considered as the clearest example of moral universalism. Kohlberg assumes that only the most advanced moral subjects, those who are informed by both universal and prescriptive moral principles, are able to take moral diversity into account to its fullest extent. The more one uses universal principles of justice in moral decision making, the more one

focuses on the relevance of values, and the more one includes different perspectives and contexts within the moral reasoning process and subsequent moral solution (Lourenco, 1996). In this respect, particularly important is the difference between moral structure and moral content. Moral structure refers to the cognitive system of operations, i.e., the moral reasoning process with its stage-wise development of rules and criteria that are employed in moral decision making. Moral content refers to the raw material that is used in these cognitive operations, that is, the issue at hand, the context of a moral conflict, the people involved, their affiliations and opinions, and the moral decision itself. While, in Kantian terms, the noumenal moral structure secures moral universalism, the phenomenal moral content accounts for moral diversity, value relevance, etcetera.

Carr's account of virtue ethics is another example of a universalistic approach to morality. Although there exist "different versions of virtues", and although the same virtues may be expressed in many different ways across time and place, Carr argues that there are universal rules which are formally internal to virtuous behavior. For example: "it is certainly not true that we count any quality as courage except that which involves remaining resolute or not losing one's nerve in dangerous, difficult or painful circumstances, and that must logically be the case for any human agent (Carr, 1991, p.6)." A similar line of reasoning could be set up in the realm of moral emotions, such as shame, guilt, and empathy (e.g. Gibbs, 1994).

In both modern moral philosophy and moral psychology, moral relativism has been heavily criticized for several reasons. In the first place, it has been argued that if morality is solely a matter of preference and social-cultural convention, morality looses its prescriptive character and therewith its authority. Lourenco (1996) even argues that morality would simply seize to exist. In the second place, Kohlberg clearly demonstrates that ethical relativity cannot logically be derived from cultural relativity: "the value-relativity position often rests on logical confusion between matters of fact (there are no standards accepted by all people), and matters of value (there are no standards that all people ought to accept), that is, it represents the naturalistic fallacy" (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 107). Moreover, moral relativism appears to be logically inconsistent, as diversity in moral values is connected with the absolute claim that all moral values are equally valid. Normative moral relativism has also been criticized for this contradiction (see page 24).

De Boer (1995) argues that the issue of moral relativism, that is, the battle between doxa and

episteme, could only arise within a context where people strive for objectively valid knowledge. We want to argue that moral psychology's search for nomological knowledge creates such "epistemic" context. It should be noted that moral psychology, with its focus on quantitative-empirical research methods, is not only haunted by moral relativism, but also appears to be biased towards moral universalism. In methodological terms, we are confronted with a method-content interaction that cannot simply be dealt with by using multiple research methods.

Quantitative-empirical research strategies, as they are employed in moral psychology, are based on the replicability of results across time and context. Latent variables or constructs, such as morality, and latent classes, such as different groups to be distinguished, must have stable indicators that resist measurement non-invariance. It is imperative that these indicators behave in the same way at different measurement points, and acquire a similar meaning among heterogeneous groups of people in ever-changing multiple contexts. In this way, constructs acquire validity, group membership is substantiated, and contexts become defined. In short, a heterogeneous field of infinite differences is framed and stabilized in order to create well defined constructs, groups, and contexts. It is exactly this homogenizing and universalizing move that is responsible for the bias towards moral universality. In fact, moral psychology urges that we first have a common base for comparison (a firm yard-stick), a time and context independent notion of morality, as well as clearly defined groups and contexts, before we can test the hypothesis that morality differs across time and place (see Saltzstein, 1997). So, as is evident with Kohlberg, cultural differences in morality only acquire meaning in a framework that favors moral universalism (Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969).

We are left, then, with three questions. Firstly: how can moral psychology preserve the objective validity of moral knowledge where empirical research methods impartially favor a distinct conception of morality, that is, moral universalism? Secondly: how should moral psychology deal with the totalizing and homogenizing influence of the research methods that are being used? Thirdly: how can moral psychology do justice to the differences that are first ironed out in order to subsequently, and we should add paradoxically, demonstrate differences in morality on a yard-stick that might be alien to the subjects under investigation? Ironically, paradoxically, we think that only moral relativists could claim to have the one and only correct answer to these questions by pointing out that "differences in moral belief are best explained under a theory that denies the existence of a single true morality" (Wong,

1993, p. 444). However, as we have shown before, if moral relativists would try to substantiate their argument by referring to those differences, they would certainly commit the naturalistic fallacy. So, we want to argue that modern moral psychology, bound by the primacy epistemology, is not in good shape to formulate the theory that we need, namely, a theory that denies the existence of a single true morality.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper we discussed four issues that are central to the current debates on moral development and education in moral psychology. Our focus has been on the relationship between empirical and theoretical research, which we have approached through the question of construct validity.

Our reconstruction of the discussion about the demarcation of the moral domain revealed, not surprisingly, that there is no agreement about what does count as "moral" and hence belongs to the moral domain, and what does not. This may, of course, be taken as a positive sign of the state of health of the field intellectually. But it does raise the question as to what precisely is under investigation in empirical research on moral development and what, subsequently, is aimed at in moral education. Since the meaning of the construct "moral development" appears to depend upon the underlying conception of morality, our reconstruction also revealed the importance of theoretical and philosophical investigation.

We established a similar conclusion with respect to the question of the relationship between facts and values, between "is" and "ought." Our reconstruction showed the inconclusiveness of the debates on this issue. Again we had to conclude that the meaning of empirical research seems to depend strongly upon underlying theoretical and philosophical standpoints, which suggested that research findings can always be discounted as circular, and hence be disqualified as inconclusive.

The problem of circularity returned in an even more pressing way in the discussion about the construct "moral action." On the one hand, as we made clear, the quality of the moral motivation is taken as a criterion to decide whether behavior is moral or not. On the other hand, however, this quality can only be measured in terms of the ensuing behavior. We had to conclude, therefore, that it is virtually impossible to define the two central constructs of moral action independently.

Our fourth issue brought to the fore a problem that had already been lingering in our discussion

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of the other issues, namely, the fact that empirical research on moral development is not neutral with respect to its object of investigation, but is biased in favor of a specific conceptualization of morality (and subsequently of moral development) -- a conceptualization which we identified as universalistic. This, once more, raises questions about the alleged independent character of empirical research.

Our discussion confirms that it is not possible to validate the central constructs of research on moral development and education on the basis of the outcome of empirical research alone. Not only is there an urgent need for conceptual work -- and hence for theoretical and philosophical investigation. More than once we had to conclude that conceptualizations "define" the phenomenon and that it is only on the basis of and after such a definition that empirical research (e.g., on the developmental *processes*) makes sense. Our analysis did, however, indicate more than only this primacy of theoretical reflection, since some of the problems that we encountered in reconstructing the field seem to be related to -- if not caused by -- a very specific conceptualization of morality and moral action, based upon an evenly specific understanding of human action more generally. The problems we encountered in the discussion about moral action, moral motivation, and moral behavior, for example, seem to be caused by a specific model of human action in which "outer" action is assumed to be caused by "inner" steering mechanisms (in this case moral motivation, but the model plays a more general role in the conceptualizations of morality and moral action that we discussed). While in this conceptualization it is assumed that action flows from understanding, it would be interesting -- to say the least -- to rethink the question of moral action from a point of view where it is assumed that understanding grows out of action (see Goodnow, 1995). A similar remark can be made with respect to the discussion about "is" and "ought." In the discussions that we reconstructed the assumption seems to be that "is" is prior to "ought," so that the question that needs to be addressed is what the place of "ought" in the domain of "is" can be. Again it would be interesting to examine the reverse approach, i.e., where "ought" is given priority over "is."

These observations not only reveal that there is a need to return to questions about the conceptualization of morality and moral development. They also suggest that we need to go back to the more fundamental philosophical assumptions that underlie the conceptualizations of morality and moral development that currently structure the field. At this level it becomes important to not only examine the modern character of these more fundamental assumptions, but also and at the very same

time to explore if, and if so to what extent a postmodern approach can make a difference. We hope that the discussion in this paper has sufficiently cleared the terrain to move to this next step.

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